



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on 1st Preparatory Seminar for the 13th Economic Forum

As delivered by Ambassador Stephan M. Minikes
to the Permanent Council,
January 19, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you Mr. Swiecicki for your very thorough report. I would also like to thank the Italian delegation, and through it the city of Trieste, for hosting this event in quite splendid style.

The Slovene chair and the Office of the Coordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities did an exceptional job setting the stage for discussions on the complex theme of demographics.

Speakers in Trieste provided an outstanding overview of the many factors affecting demographics and helped us understand possible policy responses to address dramatic demographic changes.

Such an understanding will be essential for the discussions that will follow in the next two preparatory seminars.

Particularly useful was the session on Environment and Security, which illustrated how changing demographics can put pressure on scarce or shared environmental resources and thus pose a threat to security.

Not only was this session quite pertinent to the theme of the Economic Forum, but it also involved the environmental component of the second dimension, and linked the issue specifically to security, two things that we often overlook.

Mr. Chairman, we believe the theme of the 13th Economic Forum is an exemplary one and addresses an extremely important issue that affects all of our countries. Dramatic changes in demographics, either positive or negative, resulting from changes in birth rates or population flows, require long-term policy responses.

The failure to react to demographic changes will impede a state's ability to provide for its citizens and to maintain its economy.

We thank the organizers for an excellent start to the preparatory process for the 13th Economic Forum, and we look forward to the upcoming meetings in Almaty and Kiev.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.